

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 201897 TOSEC 100131

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HEREWITH FULL TEXT GODFREY SPERLING JR. ARTICLE, MONDAY, AUGUST 25, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, HEADLINED "WILL US GET SUCKED INTO THE MIDEAST?"

2. ANYONE WHO KEEPS A CLOSE EYE ON PUBLIC OPINION THESE DAYS HAS TO KNOW ONE THING FOR CERTAIN: THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE UTTERLY OPPOSED TO BEING DRAWN INTO A WAR.

3. THIS IS NOT A SURPRISING DISCLOSURE. MOST PERSONS PROBABLY WOULD ASSUME THAT THIS ANTIWAR SENTIMENT IS WIDELY PREVALENT IN THE WAKE OF THE VIETNAM DISASTER. BUT WE HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IN OUR SAMPLINGS OF OPINION TO FIND HOW STRONGLY PEOPLE FEEL ON THIS ISSUE.

4. IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKDROP THAT ONE FINDS A GROWING CONCERN IN THIS CITY THAT THE USE OF UNITED STATES CITIZENS

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PAGE 02 STATE 201897 TOSEC 100131

TO MONITOR A MIDEAST SETTLEMENT--SHOULD IT COME ABOUT--

COULD WELL BE THE VERY ELEMENT THAT MIGHT PULL THE U.S. INTO ANOTHER WAR.

5. THE PRESIDENT AND HIS SECRETARY OF STATE ARE ARGUING THAT THE USE OF SUCH CIVILIANS WOULD NOT BE A US INVOLVEMENT THAT MIGHT LEAD TO A LATER US TROOP COMMITMENT ON THE SIDE OF ISRAEL. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THIS MIGHT NOT COME ABOUT, A HIGH U.S. OFFICIAL ANSWERED, "THAT IS OUT OF THE QUESTION."

6. WHAT WOULD THE U.S. DO IF THE U.S. CIVILIANS BECAME ENDANGERED? THE OFFICIAL GAVE A MOST UNSATISFACTORY ANSWER, INDICATING THAT THE AMERICANS MIGHT BE LEFT TO SHIFT FOR THEMSELVES. "WE WOULD NEED HUGE FORCES THERE IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO PROTECT THEM," HE SAID.

7. BUT, A QUESTIONER ASKED, WASN'T THERE STILL AN UNSPOKEN ADMINISTRATION ASSUMPTION IN EVERYTHING IT IS DOING IN THE MIDEAST THAT THE U.S. WOULD GO TO WAR TO DEFEND ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE? THE OFFICIAL REPLIED THAT THE POSITION HAD NEVER BEEN FORMALLY STATED, BUT THAT FIVE ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE PROTECTED ISRAEL. HE SAID THE U.S. WOULD GIVE ISRAEL MINIMUM ARMS FOR SURVIVAL, ADDING: "SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL IS A BASIC AMERICAN POLICY."

8. HOW FAR WOULD THE U.S. GO IN ITS POLICY OF SUPPORT OF ISRAEL? THE OFFICIAL SAID, "WE ARE NOT FACING THE QUESTION OF WHETHER AMERICANS WILL GO TO WAR. WE ARE AIDING OTHERS TO DEFEND THEMSELVES."

9. BUT WHAT IF AT SOME POINT THE ARABS DO ATTACK THROUGH ISRAELI LINES WHICH THE U.S. IS COMMITTED TO PROTECT? AND WHAT IF ISRAEL ISN'T ABLE TO BEAT BACK THE ATTACK?

10. THAT'S WHAT IS WORRYING A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO SEE THE USE OF U.S. CIVILIANS IN SINAI AS ALMOST INVITING U.S. TROOP INVOLVEMENT TO PROTECT THESE CIVILIANS. THEY FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER MAYAGUEZ RESCUE MISSION. OR--THE UNTHINKABLE THOUGHT--  
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 STATE 201897 TOSEC 100131

THEY SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE U.S. BEING DRAWN INTO WHAT COULD BE FAR WORSE THAN ANOTHER VIETNAM. THEY ENVISION THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION.

11. THERE IS A FURTHER AND RELATED ANXIETY HERE--AND THAT HAS TO DO WITH THE PRESIDENT'S APPARENT INTEREST IN LETTING ALL POSSIBLE ENEMIES KNOW THAT THE U.S. HAS NOT RULED

OUT THE "FIRST-STRIKE" USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS.

12. THIS RATTLING OF ATOMIC WEAPONS CAME THROUGH CLEARLY IN A COMMENT MADE BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES SCHLESINGER TO A GROUP OF REPORTERS RECENTLY. HE SAID:

13. "FIRST USE COULD CONCEIVABLY, LET ME underscore CONCEIVABLY, INVOLVE WHAT WE DEFINE AS STRATEGIC FORCES AND POSSIBLY, underscore POSSIBLY, INVOLVE A SELECTIVE STRIKE AT THE SOVIET UNION. WE DO NOT NECESSARILY EXCLUDE THAT BUT IT IS INDEED A VERY, VERY LOW PROBABILITY."

14. MR. SCHLESINGER WAS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO DOWNPLAY THE RATTLE--BUT THE THREAT WAS CLEARLY THERE.

15. NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE ANSWERS TO WHAT THESE HINTS ABOUT THE USE OF ATOMIC WEAPONS MIGHT MEAN. BUT THERE IS THIS BURNING QUESTION:

16. IS THE ADMINISTRATION TALKING ABOUT, AND PERHAPS THREATENING, THE USE OF ATOMIC ARMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST--INSTEAD OF TROOPS?

17. AGAIN--NO ONE SEEMS TO HAVE THE ANSWER TO WHAT MANY THINK IS A TROUBLING QUESTION. (END TEXT) INGERSOLL

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